DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 543 PS 013 995

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TITLE Socialization of Affect: Effects of Parent Attitudes.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association (San Francisco, CA, April 6-10, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; Age Differences; *Childhood Attitudes; Decision Making; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Emotional Development; Expectation; *Parent Influence; Social Environment; *Socialization
IDENTIFIERS Justification (Psychology)

ABSTRACT

Children's beliefs about why affective expressive behavior should be dissociated from internal state were elicited via a structured interview and investigated in conjunction with their parents' (1) attitudes toward children's expressive behavior, (2) perceptions of their own self-monitoring, and (3) perceptions of their families' "social climate." Participating were 32 children in the second, fifth, and eighth grades of an urban west coast parochial school. Children, distributed approximately equally by age and sex, responded to four photographed scenarios of conflicts in which a depicted child could respond with a facial expression that was discrepant from internal affect. This procedure previously had yielded significant age differences in reasoning about the dissociation of affect and expressive behavior. In addition, children were asked about the justification for regulating expressive behavior, the interpersonal consequences of regulation, and the ways they balanced showing or not showing real feeling. The children's parents responded to the Parent Attitude toward Child Expressiveness Scale, to Snyder's Self-Monitoring Scale, and to Moos' Family Environment Scale. Data were analyzed by means of stepwise regression analyses for each of the three child variables. As expected, age was found to be signifiantly related to all of the three variables. Additional results indicated the effect of maternal and paternal attitudes on children's beliefs. (RH)

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Socialization of Affect: Effects of Parent Attitudes

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Paper presented at Western Psychological Association, San Francisco, April 1983.

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Socialization of Affect: Effects of Parent Attitudes

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A significant problem in emotional development is the process of dissociation between internal affective state and the external expressive behavior that is revealed to others. It is a dissociative process that starts very early, and among its precursors may be the use of emotional behaviors such as crying as communicative symbols rather than only as direct manifestations of the internal state of distress (e.g., many toddlers will cry about a minor hurt only when their caretaker is in the immediate vicinity). The research presented here examined the socialization of affect in older children, ages 7 to 13 years. More specifically, children's beliefs about why affective expressive behavior should be dissociated from internal state (and as a consequence 'appropriately' regulated or not) were elicited via a structured interview and investigated in conjunction with their parents' (a) attitudes toward children's expressive behavior, (b) perception of their own self-monitoring, and (c) perception of their families' "social climate."

Parental influence on children's beliefs about regulated versus unregulated expressive behavior was assumed to be communicated by means of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. The theoretical viewpoint adopted here is that social learning mechanisms affect emotional socialization more strongly in the early years (i.e., preschool), but that at older age levels the expectations held by others and one's own internalized expectancies become more influential in the shaping of emotional experience.

Finally, developmental differentiation, as indexed by age, was presumed to have a major impact on how children comprehended (a) justifications for regulated expressive behavior, (b) interpersonal consequences of having regulated expressive behavior, and (c) the integrative balance needed be-

tween showing one's genuine emotional state versus regulating one's expressive behavior. However, the effects of the parent variables were hypothesized as contributing further unique information about children's beliefs about these features of emotional experience over and beyond that which was accounted for by development alone.

Method

Sample

The participants were 32 children, approximately equally distributed by age and sex, in grades 2, 5, and 8 from an urban west coast parochial school and their parents. All participated voluntarily.

Procedure

For children. The children were seen individually and interviewed using as stimuli four photographed scenarios of children involved in conflicts in which the target child in the scenario could respond with a facial expression that was discrepant from internal affect. This procedure had been followed in an earlier study (Saarni, 1979) and yielded significant age differences in reasoning about the dissociation of affect and expressive behavior. In the present study the children were additionally asked about (a) the rationale or justification for the target child's regulation of expressive behavior, (b) the interpersonal consequences of regulation of expressive behavior (i.e., what would the interactant think about the target child's expressive behavior in the scenario), and (c) the child's own rationale for how s/he personally figures out the balance between showing or not showing her or his real feelings to others. (These variables will hereafter be referred to as (a) justification, (b) consequences, and (c) balance. Note that the first two refer to the child's responses to the photographed scenarios, and the last refers to the child's belief about her/his own emotional experience.)

For parents. The parents individually responded to the author-developed questionnaire, Parent Attitude toward Child Expressiveness Scale (PACES), to Snyder's Self-Monitoring Scale (SMS; Snyder, 1974), and to Moos' Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos, 1974).

A scores on PACES provides a measure of the respondent's degree of permissiveness - control allowed toward a child's hypothetical emotional expressive behavior. All items begin with "if my child...," with the intent being to elicit the parent's expectations about their response to their own child's expressive behavior. The affective expressive behavior sampled in PACES includes anger (4 items), distress (3 items), fear (3 items), anxiety or nervousness (3 items), interest or curiosity (3 items), happiness (3 items), and disgust (1 item). A copy of the PACE Scale has been appended to this paper with a cover sheet indic ating test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability of the weights assigned to the multiple choice options.

The other two measures, FES and SMS, are either commercially available (FES; Moos, 1974) or frequently used research instruments (SMS; Snyder, 1974, 1979). Their reliability is high, and their construct validity may be considered adequate, although challengable. The SMS yields a single score indicating the degree to which the respondent monitors her/his interactional behavior, including expressiveness. The score appears to index both the facility and motivation with which the individual manages her/his impression on others .

The FES subscales used in this study were Expressiveness, Independence, and Control. Higher scores indicate relatively greater salience of these dimensions in the family's "social climate." Control is somewhat negatively correlated with the other two subscales (r= -.27 and -.26), while the other two subscales are somewhat positively correlated (r=.28). Moos defines these three subscales as follows:

"Expressiveness: The extent to which family members are allowed and encouraged to act openly and to express their feelings directly.

Independence: The extent to which family members are encouraged to be assertive, self-sufficient, to make their own decisions, and to think things out for themselves.

Control: Assesses the extent to which the family is organized in a hierarchical manner, the rigidity of family rules and procedures, and the extent to which family members order each other around." (Moos, 1974).

Coding of child data. The first variable examined, children's justification for the scenario target child's regulation of expressive behavior, used the four categories of justification developed in the earlier study (Saarni, 1979). These four categories, when ranked, indicate increasing subtlety and implicitly increasing complexity of social perspective-taking. In order of increasing complexity the childrens' justification responses were rated at follows:

1= trouble-avoiding set (e.g., "she doesn't want to get caught").

2= qualifying factors of a relationship (e.g., "he doesn't want to hurt his aunt's feelings by showing he doesn't like the gift").

3= maintenance of self-esteem (e.g., "she doesn't want to look dumb in the other girl's eyes").

4= maintenance of norms (e.g., "it's not polite to react that way").

The children's justification ratings were summed across the four scenarios yielding a final score.

The second variable, children's expectations about the interpersonal consequences for the target child's having regulated his/her expressive behavior, was coded by means of five ranked categories. This consequences variable was also intended to indicate increasing subtlety and perspective-taking with higher ratings. The category ratings are as follows:

1= child says s/he does not know or gives a tangential response.

2= child says there can be no dissemblance in expressive behavior, despite interviewer suggestions to the contrary.

3= child contends that the facial expression adopted by the target child will not influence the interactant's reaction to the target child.

4= child says that the target child's intent in dissembling is congruent with how the interactant interprets the facial expression (i.e., the sender is successful in achieving his/her purposes and is taken at 'face value').

5= the child thinks that the interactant is likely to see past the dissemblance and realize that the target child's facial expression is a 'false front.'

This variable was also summed across all four scenarios yielding a final score.

The third variable examined children's beliefs or expectancies about how they personally 'decide' when to reveal their genuine feelings or not. This variable, labeled balance, was coded according to the following ranked categories:

1= child does not know or gives a tangential response.

2= child cites a concrete instance in which s/he concealed her/his feelings but does not generalize (e.g., "once I fell off my bike and it hurt bad but I didn't cry").

3= child gives an unelaborated response that it depends on the situation, or they just use common sense as to when they show their feelings or not.

4= child gives an elaborated and generalizable response, either situation- or relationship-oriented, with which s/he balances revealing or not revealing feelings (e.g., "I wouldn't show my feelings when people are in a bad mood. I'd show my feelings if people are in a good mood and feel like listening and talking to someone.").

5= child gives an elaborated and generalizable response about relying on own self-perception of how they feel <u>about</u> the feeling itself and on other-perception of how another person may evaluate the 'appropriateness' of these feelings if they are revealed. (Buss' (1980)

discussion of private and public self-awareness is relevant here; this last category was reserved for children's responses that integrated both private and public self-awareness. For example, "well, it would depend on how important the feeling was to me and how I'd think the people I was with would react to my showing how I really felt. Probably if I felt embarrassed about the feeling, I wouldn't show it, or I'd try to smile.")

Clearly this variable also indicates greater subtlety and complex perspective-taking with higher ratings. Since this question about balance was asked only once (i.e., "How do you figure out for yourself the balance between when to show your real feelings and when not to?"), there was obviously no summation involved as compared to the other two variables.

Results

The data were analyzed by means of stepwise regression analyses for each of the three child variables. The acceptable p value was set at .005, due to the number of multiple comparisons. Eleven predictor variables were entered: child's age, mother's PACES, father's PACES, the three FES subscales for mother and for father, mother's SMS, and father's SMS. The outcome for each child variable will be discussed in turn.

Justification. Two of the predictor variables contributed significantly to the variation in this child variable. Age, as expected, accounted for the most variation (r=.40), but additionally father's Self-Monitoring Scale was a significant contributor. Together they accounted for .26 (R^2) of the variation in children's justification responses.

Consequences. Again age was the major significant predictor of this child variable (r=.70), but father's Self-Monitoring and father's PACES also contributed significantly, yielding an R^2=.65. Interestingly, the two father variables obtained negative regression coefficients, suggesting that lower scores on father's PACES (i.e., more permissive) and on father's SMS

(i.e., less concerned with self-monitoring) were associated with higher, more complex and subtle child perceptions of the interpersonal consequences for regulated expressive behavior.

Balance. Predictably, age was again the major contributor to this child variable (r=.74). In addition, three maternal variables proved to be significant contributors to the variation in this child variable. They were (in order) mother's Self-Monitoring, mother's PACES, and mother's FES Expressiveness. Together all four variables obtained a robust R^2=.74. All regression coefficients were positive, in contrast to the finding for the two father variables in the regression analysis on the consequences variable.

Correlations between child variables. The correlation between the balance and consequences variables was the only substantial one obtained, r=.59. The other coefficients were r=.32 for justification and balance and r=.36 for justification and consequences. This pattern seems largely due to the degree to which developmental level (age) contributed to these variables. Relative to the justification variable, both balance and consequences had substantial variation contributed by age in their respective regression analyses.

No sex differences were found for the child variables, which is consistent with several studies on children's comprehension of emotional experience (e.g., Barden, et al., 1980; Saarni, 1979). the outcome of

Discussion and Conclusion

The data from this study appear to extend the findings obtained by Johnson and McGillicuddy-Delisi (1983), who found that maternal affective feedback behaviors predicted pre-schoolers' high-level rationales for understanding rules and conventions. In the present study, grade-school children's higher-level rationales for their understanding of the balance or integration needed in showing one's feelings or not was also significantly predicted by their mothers' affective attitudes (as opposed to the affective behaviors that

affected the preschoolers). The maternal affective behaviors that predicted higher-level rationales for preschoolers were in fact negative in tone and typically oriented toward 'correcting' their young children. Similarly, in the present study two of the maternal attitude measures also indicated that increasing control towards children's expressiveness (PACES) and increasing concern with self-monitoring (SMS) predicted higher-level rationales. However, the FES Expressiveness scale adds another dimension in the above prediction in that it too was associated with higher-level rationales. Thus, although the mother professed more controlling attitudes, she also perceived a greater degree of expressiveness in her family. Perhaps the two more controlling measures derive from the mother's perception that since there is a high degree of family expressiveness there is likewise a higher need for regulation and monitoring of affective displays, which she expresses both attitudinally (PACES) and by modeling a higher degree of self-monitoring (SMS).

The fathers' attitudes towards children's expressive behavior and their own impression management (SMS) would appear to have contradictory effects compared to the mothers'. However, I think this seeming contradiction can be resolved by emphasizing the differences between the two variables, consequences and balance, that are differentially affected by the parents. First, the consequences variable is about hypothetical characters in a story that the child is asked 'to reason out loud for.' The balance variable refers to the child's own beliefs about how s/he personally integrates showing or not showing her or his feelings. Second, the consequences variable seems to represent an orientation toward how others think about others, while the balance variable emphasizes a self-reflective differentiation. Both variables imply increasingly complex perspective-taking with higher ratings, but the perspective-taking is oriented outward for the consequences variable and inward for the balance variable.

What I will suggest here is that fathers whose attitudes about affective

expressive behavior are more permissive -- toward children or their own behavior -- probably also tend to be less constrained by conventional masculine role stereotypes regarding the importance of maintaining the stoic front. Such fathers, being more feeling-oriented, may also communicate more within their families about how they feel, how others reacted, how subsequent emotional interactions were affected, and so forth. The inference here is that such fathers make more salient for their children interpersonal affective transactions. Fathers who are at the opposite end of this spectrum, i.e., controlling or restrictive toward children's expressiveness and espouse greater concern for their own self-monitoring, would presumably then not facilitate this salience and differentiation of interpersonal affective transactions for their children to the same degree. Interestingly, fathers' PACES scores correlated fairly strongly with their FES Control scores (r=.52), and it should be recalled that the Control subscale was oriented toward describing a family's social climate in terms of its rigidity of rules and procedures, the extent of ordering one another around, and by its degree of hierarchical organization. (Mothers' PACES scores correlated r=.33 with their FES Control scores.)

It is harder to understand why only the maternal attitude variables affected the children's expectancies about revealing their own feelings. I am not entirely comfortable with the polarization argument that mothers represent the expressive pole in a family while fathers represent the instrumental pole (cf., Lueptow, 1980; Weitz, 1977; Zelditch, 1955). However, this viewpoint may be implicated in the present pattern of results: fathers mediated expectancies about <u>others</u>' responses whereas mothers mediated expectancies about <u>personal</u> responses toward emotional experience.

In conclusion, the data presented here appear to confirm in part the argument advanced that at older age levels the expectations held by others influence the expectancies of the individual. In this case the expectations held by the parents were presumed to be expressed through their attitudes as measured by the three insturments used in the present study. The notion that emotional socialization may be quite sensitive to others' expectations rather than being primarily or only shaped by social learning mechanisms also receives support in this study. Such a perspective has also been argued by Chapman (1981) with regard to children's behavioral conduct and by Lueptow (1980) about sex-role socialization. Further support is found in attribution research with adults, especially Baumeister and Cooper's (1981) study on how expectations affect subsequent emotional experience.

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